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# Programs accelerate on-line searches

E-BIZ

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Many people are unhappy with their capabilities in searching the Internet.

They venture on-line, enter a few words in one of the popular search engines and get back an extensive list of results. As they browse through these items, they realize that most of them are irrelevant, outdated or indeed, barely less than junk. Frustrated, they conclude the Internet isn't a useful research tool.

That's certainly not true. The main problem is that most people don't learn how to search effectively on-line. As well, few are aware of the many specialized programs available that are designed to make looking for information on the Internet easy.

These programs, which I call search accelerators, run on Windows or Macintosh systems. They completely automate the searching process, allowing you to tap several different search engines at once.

When you type a word or phrase, the programs gather what is found by the search engines and eliminate duplicates. They'll then build a simple summary where you can view the results.

Use such a program, and you'll find that your search capabilities improve immeasurably.

One of the best such programs is Copernic, which was developed by Copernic Technologies Inc. of Sainte-Foy, Que. This isn't a small-scale, little-known program. It has been profiled in leading publications such as PC Magazine, and attracted at least 1.5 million users around the world. It has gained a reputation as being one of the most straightforward search utilities on the market.

Copernic helps you in automating the search process. For example, if you want to search the World Wide Web, type what you are looking for, and Copernic will tap search engines such as Altavista, Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos and others. In just a few minutes, you'll be browsing results.

The program contains other useful features. You can instruct Copernic to automatically download the Web pages for all the search results to your personal computer, so that you can browse them without being connected to the Internet.

I recently used the program to undertake a number of searches before starting a plane trip. It was no problem to review a few hundred Web pages of relevant information while 37,000 feet in the air.

Another benefit of Copernic is that it doesn't restrict what you can explore to the Web. You can undertake a search of subjects as specialized as health care, business news, kids topics, newspapers, technical news, E-mail addresses, sports news or other topics. You can even use it to find songs.

In each of these cases, Copernic is programmed to perform a search of particular information archives on-line. Do a business news search, and it will examine archives for Business Week, Forbes, CNNfn, Fortune, USAToday, Money.com and others.

Undertake a health care search, and you will be examining data from massive medical search engines and archives, rather than the World Wide Web at large, thus helping you get accurate and relevant information.

Canadian content? By all means. You can undertake a search that allows you to automatically examine archives found at The Globe and Mail, CBC and other major Canadian news Web sites.

You can try the program for free by visiting the company's Web site, **www.copernic.com**. If you like it, you can upgrade to Copernic PRO for $29.95, which gives you the full flexibility of the program.

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